

# Are Librarians Really Teachers?

## Reflections and Analysis

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- 23 institutions across New York City
- approximately 245, 000 students
- founded in 1847
- largest urban public university in the United States
- includes senior colleges and community colleges in all 5 boroughs in many disciplines:
  - law
  - medicine
  - education
  - social sciences and humanities
  - pure and applied sciences
  - health sciences





**COLLEGE OF STATEN ISLAND**  
*The City University of New York*



- Senior college specializing in nursing, education, and business
- 13,000 students on 204 acre campus
- 235,000 books / 5,000 e-books
- 800 print journals
- 26,000 electronic journals
- Over 140 databases
- 15 full time library faculty/ 10 part time library faculty

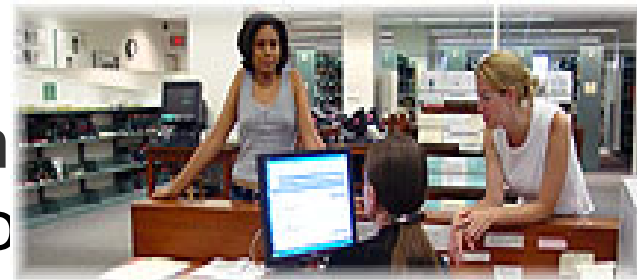




JOHN JAY COLLEGE  
THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK  
OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE



- senior college
- 14, 000 students
- criminal justice focus
- 14 full-time librarians, 9 part-time
- more than 300,000 books, periodicals
- over 100 databases
- over 36,000 electronic journals



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# Definition of teaching



**Teach:** show, present, direct, guide, "show by way of information or instruction" (common), enable, instruct, "give systematic information"

**Teacher:** teaches, instructs, an instructor, tutor, shows or points out, "function is to give instruction, esp. in a school"

*Oxford English Dictionary , The Oxford American Dictionary of Current English*

# Our definition of teaching

Our most broad and inclusive definition:

Anyone who uses various methods and strategies to share knowledge with another person.

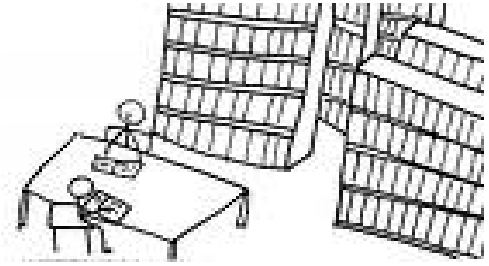
# Literature review



Hernon, P. & Pastine, M. (1977). **Student perceptions of academic librarians.** *College and research libraries* , 38 , 129-139.

- service or teaching oriented (examine accountabilities)?
- 362 respondents, 20 interviews
- 31.6% - learning experience
- future studies should explore student definitions of teaching

# Literature review



Fagan, J. (2003). **Students' perceptions of academic librarians.** *The reference librarian*, 37 (78), 131-148.

- surveyed 48 undergraduate students
- explored reasons why librarians choose the profession, educational qualifications, etc



# Literature Review

Wilson, P (1979). **Librarians as Teachers: The Study of an Organization Fiction.** *The Library Quarterly* , 49(2), 146-162

- Wilson argues that librarians' professional identity represents an organization fiction.
- Librarians identify as "teachers" to help explain their job functions and to foster a more comforting self-image.
- So much diversity in librarianship, it's difficult to describe our profession to the public.
- Wilson argues that many academic librarians are obsessed with faculty status, thus they identify as teachers
- Wilson claims librarians do not teach. They "inform" and "react" , but they do not have subject expertise

# Literature Review

Budd, J (1982). **Librarians are Teachers.** *Library Journal* , 107 (18), 1944-1946

- Budd argues that librarians teach at the reference desk
- Library profession is built on the provision of disseminating knowledge back to the user
- Librarians teach during the reference interview at the reference desk
- Budd argues that librarians have subject expertise and jargon
- Librarians need to learn how to communicate knowledge to the user like classroom teachers

# Description of our study

- Distributed a questionnaire to both JJ and CSI Students.
- Distributed in library classrooms, in the cafeteria, campus centre, and library cafe
- Comprised of 6 questions
- Used convenience and snowball sampling
- Garnered 500 responses.
- Incentive was chocolate and free pens and pencils

# Questionnaire

Questions included:

1. Age of consent (18) ?
2. Year of study ?
3. Campus location ?
4. Are librarians "teachers"?
5. If "not", then what other words describe us?
6. Have they ever visited the library in person or via web site?

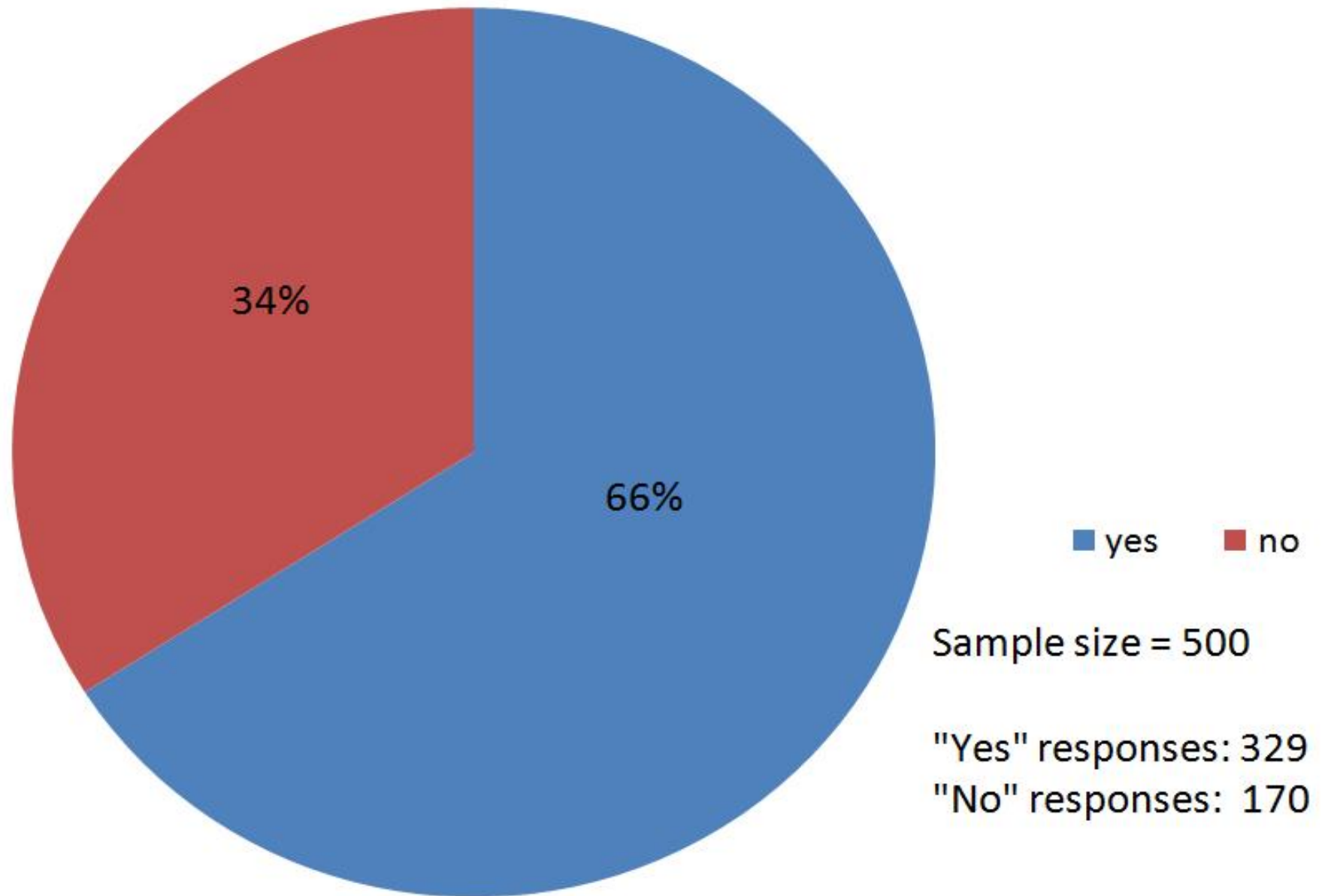
# Why this study?



- To reflect on our own teaching and its effects on students
- To further contribute to the literature of librarians' professional identity
- To further explore students' perception of our teaching role
- To reflect what it means to be a teacher

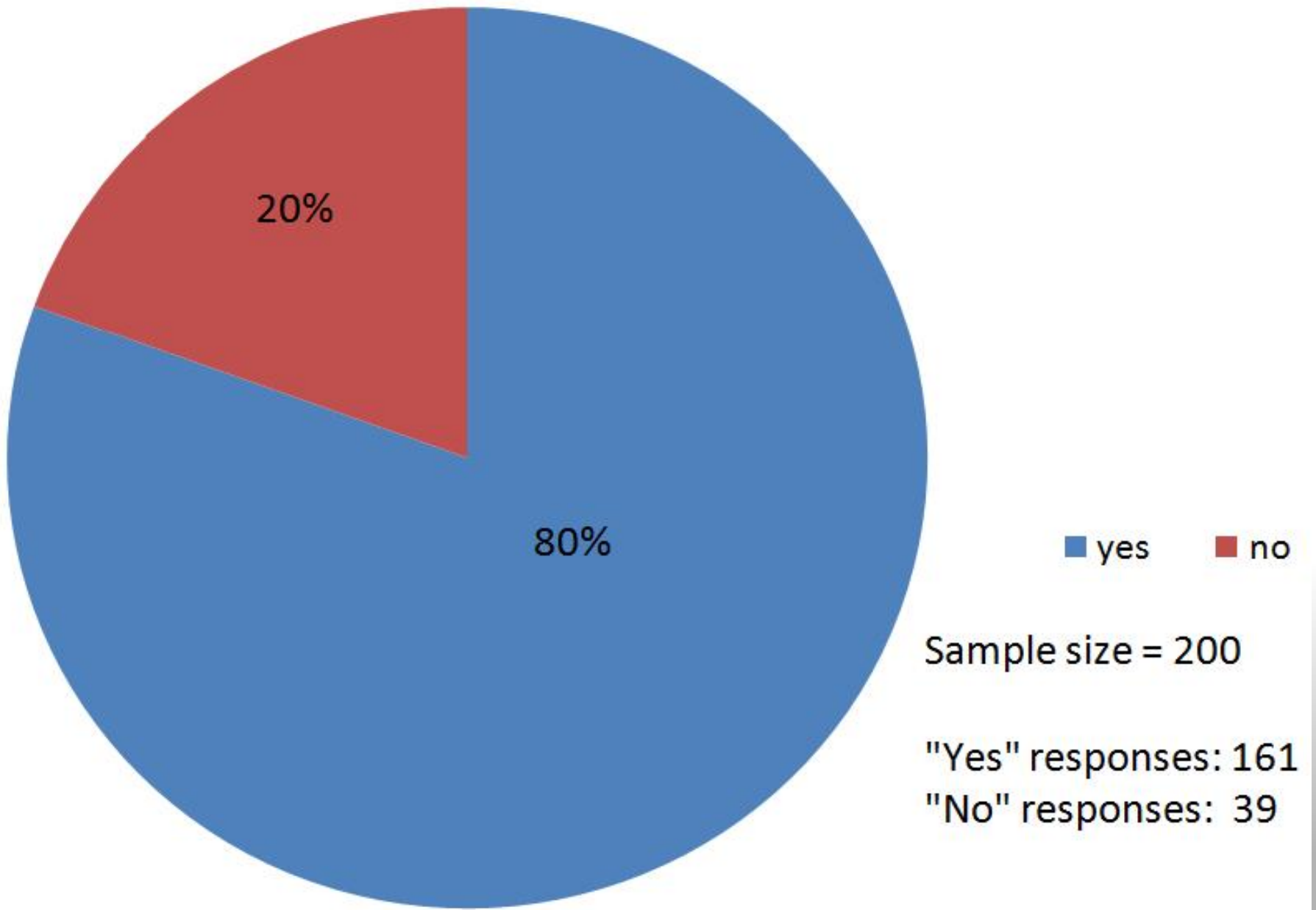
# Findings: Are Librarians Teachers?

both JJ and CSI, entire sample

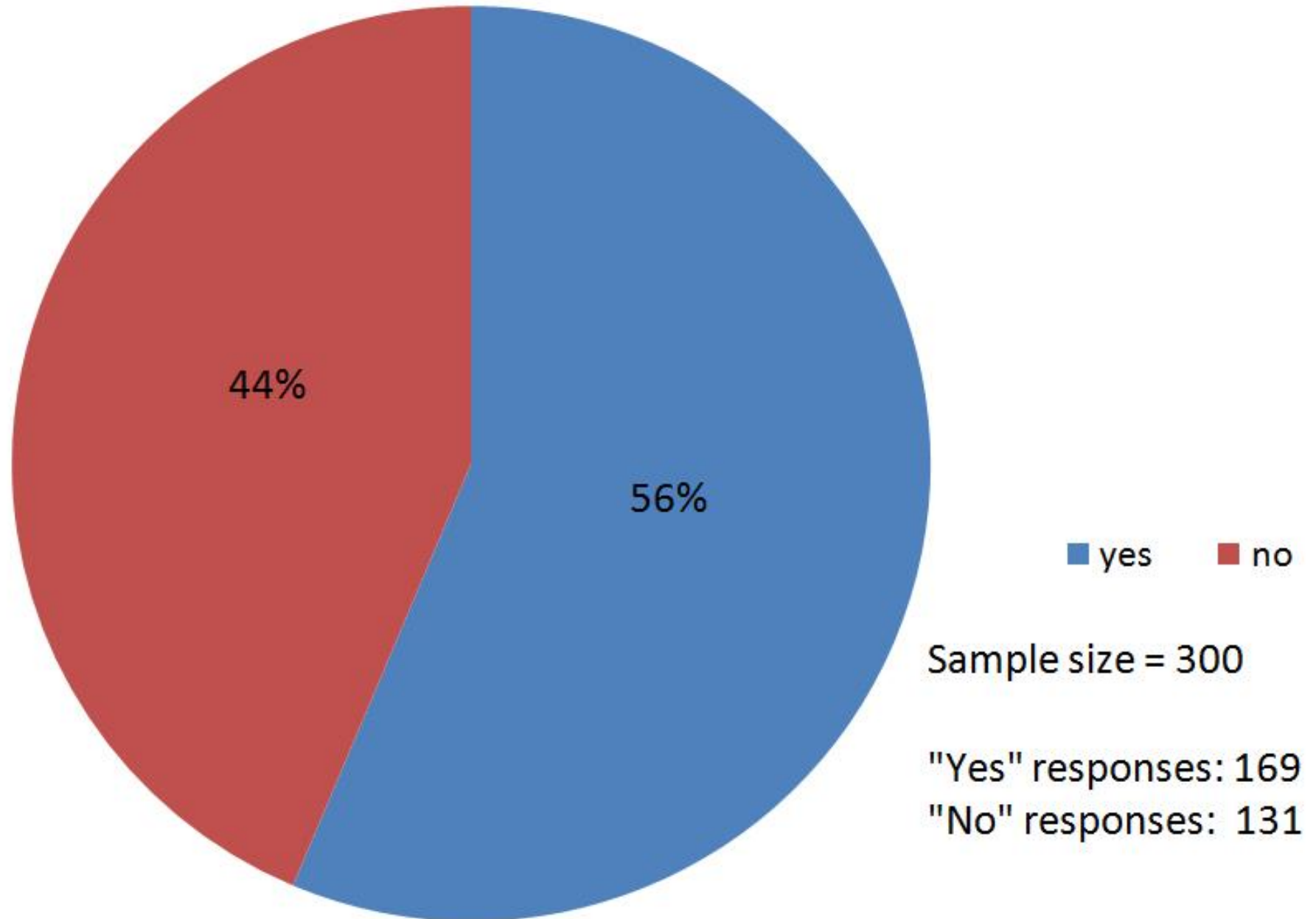


# Findings: Are Librarians Teachers?

## Classroom Data, both JJ and CSI

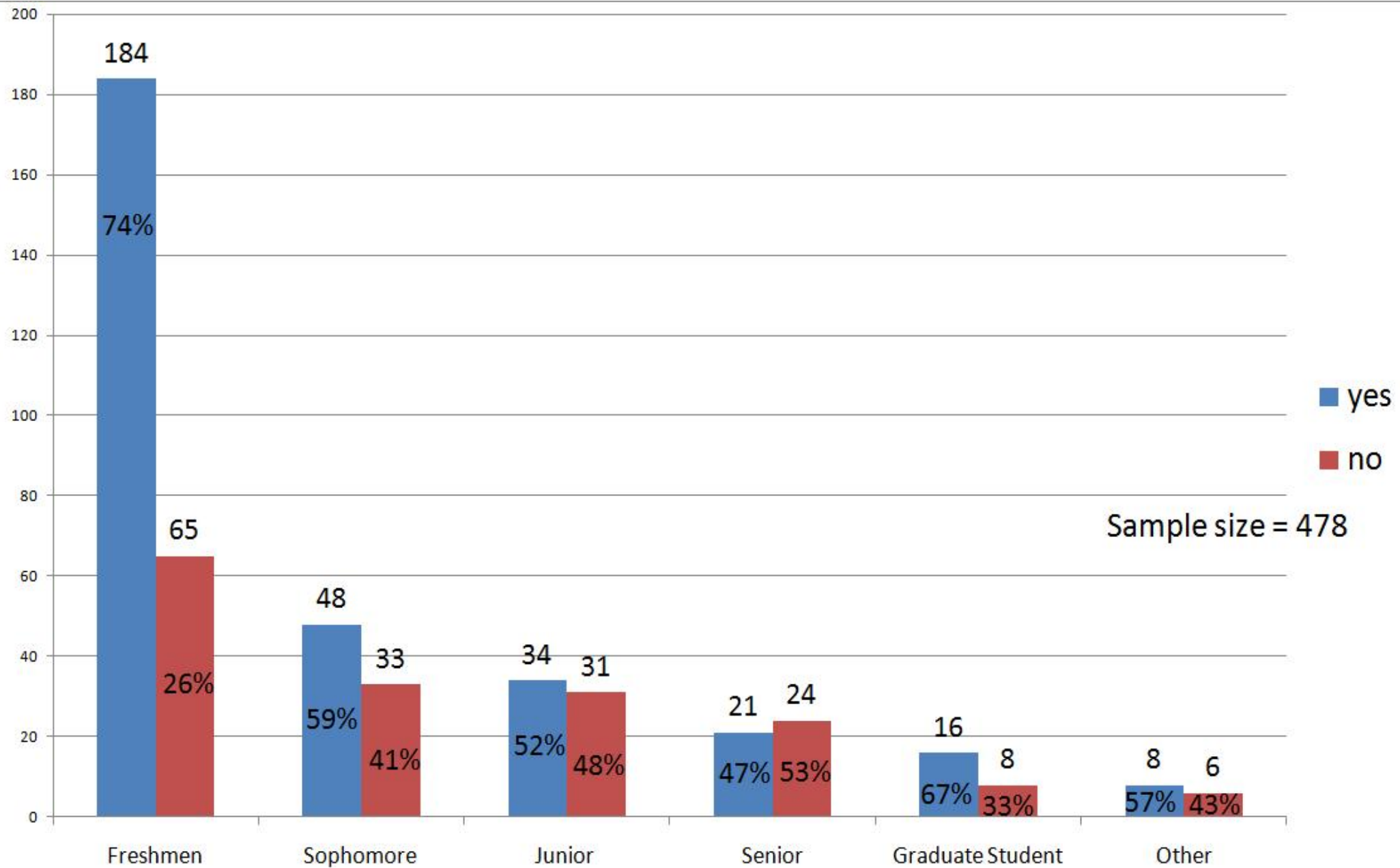


# Findings: Data Outside The Classroom

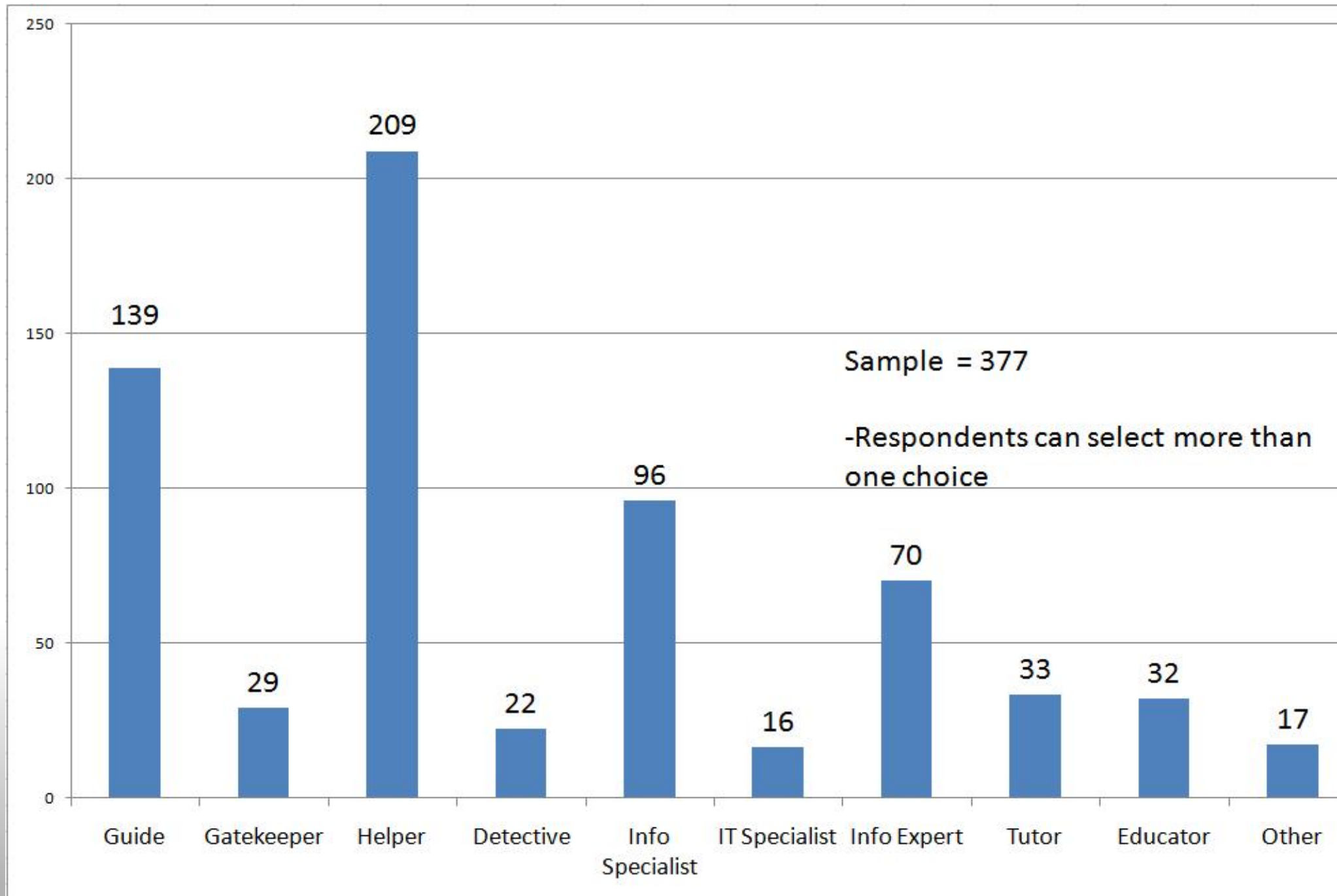




# Findings: Level of Study (both colleges)



# Adjectives that describe librarians



# Themes That Emerged From the Question: "Are Librarians Teachers?"

## **Yes**

1. helpful
2. knowledgeable
3. subject expertise
4. educational role
5. librarians and teachers are equated

## **No**

1. just librarians, nothing else...
2. they have a lack of qualifications
3. not in a classroom
4. do not teach a subject
5. not helpful

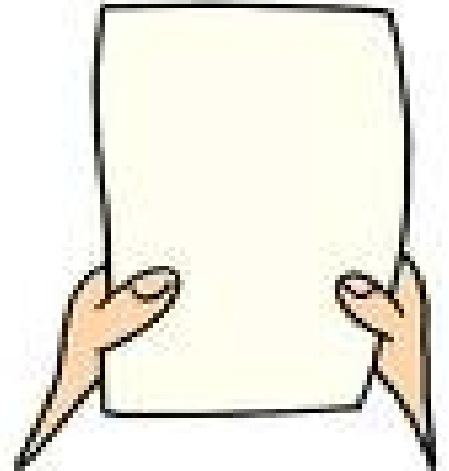


# Moving forward...

- Student perceptions are based on stereotypes
- Further need to market the library and librarian roles
- Providing more library instruction may change student perceptions
- Further investigate other factors such as age, race, gender, academic discipline, and ethnicity.

# Limitations

- not enough demographic info, academic discipline, library use
- librarians administered questionnaire
- administered after each class
- not a representative sample
- incentive (i.e. chocolate and pens)
- electronic vs. paper survey
- not a survey



# Reflections, comments and questions

- review handouts with select comments
- reflections on our identity as teachers
- questions?



# Select student comments



## Yes

"...librarians not only have to be knowledgeable about subjects, but have to be able to explain and show students how to search and understand library material."

"... the librarian is a teacher of method and basis... we learn how to access important information.."

"....what makes someone a teacher anyway?"

## No

"I don't think they know a particular subject well [...] but they can help or guide you in the right direction..."

"I see them as someone to help me find books."



Questions/ Comments?